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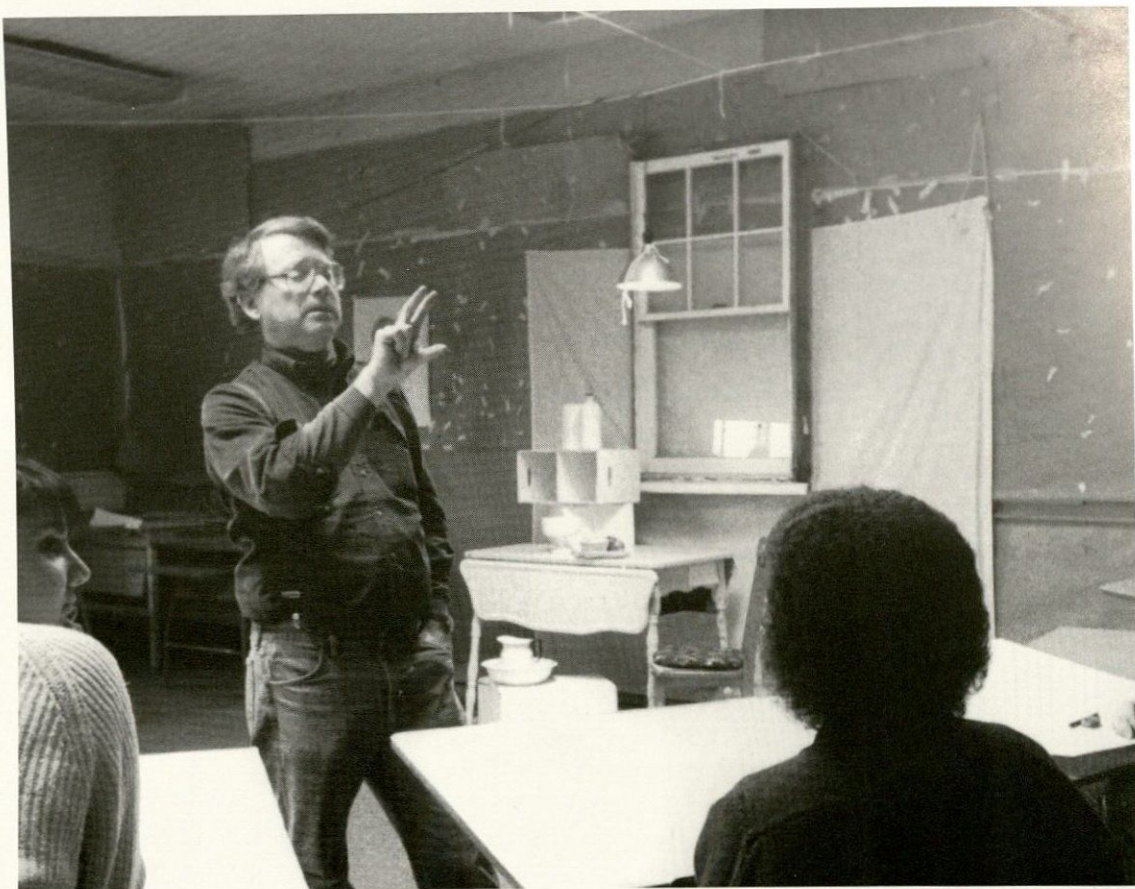


**The Students of Professor Charles Eldred:
An Alumni Memorial Exhibition**

Binghamton University Art Museum

October 25–December 13, 1996

*Sponsored by the Binghamton University Studio Art Department,
Alumni Association, and University Art Museum*



CHARLES J. ELDRED was born in Binghamton in 1938 and attended schools there through college. He graduated from Harpur College in 1960. Later he completed some graduate work at Columbia University, loving the city and its museums. In 1962, he began teaching in the Art Department at Harpur College and became a legend there by 1994, when he taught his last class.

Eldred exhibited for many years in important regional shows at many museums, including the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Ithaca College, Colgate University, the Arnot Art Museum, Cooperstown Art Association, and Roberson Museum and Science Center. He also showed sculpture and drawings in major national exhibits at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, the National Museum of Sport at Madison Square Garden, the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., the New York State Museum in Albany, the Toledo Museum of Art in Toledo, Ohio, the Craft and Folk Art Museum in Los Angeles, Skidmore College, Parsons School of Design, Alfred University, and the National Museum of American Art of the Smithsonian Institution.

Major solo Eldred shows were organized at Binghamton University in 1968, at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1973, at Roberson Museum and Science Center in 1980 and again in 1992, at SUNY New Paltz in 1980, and at the University of California at Berkeley in 1991.

Sculptures, paintings, drawings and photo collages by Charles Eldred are in numerous private and public collections including the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Worcester Art Museum, the Everhart Museum, the Binghamton University Art Museum, and Roberson Museum and Science Center.

LIST OF EXHIBITORS

Steven Abusch	Susan Moran
Priscilla Snow Algava	Tracey Munz
Andrea Barbakoff	Scott Neary
Aileen Bassis	Kathryn Niles
Lydia Benscher	Myron Ochman
Joan Bickelhaupt	Marina Oransky
Patricia Brown	Ronald Polesnak
Trissy Callan	Ellyn Rabinowitz
Virginia Castagna	Lee Ranaldo
Kate Collie	Renee Danielson Robinson
John Copoulos	Herb Rosenberg
Deborah Davidson	Alicia Rothman
Jen Dennis	Steven Rushefsky
David Friedheim	Robin Schwalb
RA Friedman	Jennifer Scott
Bonnie Worthman Goodman	Charles Semowich
Dennis Green	Gary Shaheen
Laurie Greenstein	Jolene Reynolds Shepard
Leslie Henderson Harris	Lori Shorin
Shelley Haven	Emma Skurnick
David Higgins	David Skyrca
Rosalyn Jacobs	Diane Sophrin
Judy James	Barbara Steen-Elton
Karin Kennedy	Yoko Sugawara
Rita Kramnicz Kepner	Sarah Suh
Joy Kinigstein	David Taft
Evelyn Klie	Mark Tiffany
Danielle Krcmar	Tami Tolpa
Bob Kretz	Michelle Tulumello
Kathleen Kretz	Roslyn Tunis
Karen Kucharski	Nancy Wallach
Amy Feldman Levine	Anne Weber
Martha Lipton	Lisabeth Weisband
Christine Makis	Coral Oliver Woodbury
Yukie Matsushita	Heidi Young
Richard Meyer	Dena Zemsky

THESE HIGH WALLS HOLD WITHIN THEM some of our strongest memories of the place, accumulations of images from student and faculty exhibits, from guest critics' solos, and from our chance encounters with pieces we each separated out that were able to teach without words. Now, you, the alumni, have returned to carry your gifts of inquiry back to these walls, this work made by hand through the love of "sitting there," which Eldred spoke about so eloquently in the arms of his remarkable classroom.

Your faithfulness to your studios over the years is readily apparent. You submitted slides, framed and sent these works with a greater care, a more profound respect than you might have felt in the preparation for other major exhibits you've mounted over the years.

Alicia Rothman (Class of '76) states poignantly, "Sadly, there will never be another Eldred." We know this to be true. He gently tucked (in carefully considered proportions) his brand of gold-leafed courage and questioning into our very being, into our drawing joints. He was everyone's teacher, faculty and students alike. We learned from his daily inspired still lifes on which his lessons were based and from his own exhibitions and the student shows he so brilliantly designed. He taught me to lay out a show on the floor, to find the sight line, and to never abandon my excitement in the hanging of each new work. He instructed in the presence of our mutual students. We were all students of art, and he made us feel the great joy and privilege to be a part of that long line in history.

Always there was laughter as we worked. In 1976 I had a solo show here. With most of the works hung, I beckoned Eldred into the gallery and made him sit on the steps to the mezzanine a week before the opening. "What do you think?," I asked with obvious concern. His reply was, "Step right up folks! On loan from the Louvre, the work of Lydia Sokolynski!" As Kate Kretz and Jen Dennis reminisced in their letters, here was this unusually serious teacher who often practiced surprise analogies that made us burst out laughing. His timing was unique and always comforting.

We've tried to remember all of these quotes clearly. They were gems of his own invention, come upon while constantly building new work. "A drawing is the next best thing to being there." Eldred left voices in our heads, good ones, healthy ones, the kind we smile at in the loneliness of our studios and that have kept us going.

— Linda Sokolowski
September, 1996

I know I speak for all my friends who studied with him when I say that Eldred was a mentor for us all. In his quiet, passionate way, and with enormous integrity, he taught us everything he knew about art and life, and how to find out what we ourselves knew about both. He set an example of what the artist does, how each artist establishes his or her own personal relationship with their work and with art. He taught us, by example, how to teach. Many of his former students are, in fact, teachers today. This is all a testament to the power of his teaching and the caring that lay behind it.

Most importantly, however, Eldred taught us, through the act of drawing, to see: in every sense of the word. It was through drawing that our eyes were opened, through the visual meditation of exploring what lay before us that we could come to understand our own individual relationship to the world which we each perceived. As verbal literacy is necessary for the writer's thoughts, feelings and beliefs to unfold, so a visual literacy needs to be developed in order that the artist might find his or her own creative path. Remarkably, it is through the seemingly simple, but timeless act of learning to draw, that the entire creative process is opened up to the art student. Regardless of the direction a particular student's work may take as it matures, it is initially through the act of drawing that excitement, power and a personal voice are discovered. When students walked away from Eldred's drawing classes, each carried their own key to their own art. It was not merely a tool that we grasped, but our own future.

— Diane Sophrin
Class of '72

The powerful, ingenious, and sometimes inscrutable presence of Professor Charles Eldred was formative for me in the 1969-1972 drawing courses I took at SUNY-Binghamton. Mr. Eldred, as he was referred to by most students (and I only knew him in the context of the classroom), proved to be a formidable teacher. His commitment to art and to teaching was genuine and multifaceted and I still remember his insights and comments today, some 25 years later. Mr. Eldred offered fresh, personal, and hard-won strategies for making art. His ideas stretched the boundaries of current thought and familiar forms of expression. He made a fine role model for us as both an artist and a teacher.

From my two years of study with Mr. Eldred come the following valued memories. These, and his scribbled comments on my class drawings, form for me a record and a testimonial to the quality of Mr. Eldred's instruction. I hope the following provides a taste of Mr. Eldred and his teaching legacy.

Mr. Eldred excelled at teaching the techniques and skills of drawing. He offered solid instruction in all aspects of drawing: perspective, drawing the figure, still life, composition, and line and shading techniques. His explanations and demonstrations of these techniques were clear and personal, and they often related to one of his works in progress. Among the many ways he offered to approach drawing (and seeing) were: "draw the spaces around the objects," "draw the intersections of lines," "draw the relationship between the objects," "change drawing hands," or "change your drawing medium." Instead of using trendy or faddish books on how to draw, Mr. Eldred recommended the drawings of the old masters and a practical book called *The Natural Way to Draw*, by Kimon Nicolaides. His respect for these more traditional drawing resources eventually became our own.

Complementing his teaching of technique was his presence as an artist. He was, I think, a very reflective, private person, but in the service of his students he revealed a great deal of who he was and shared what he felt would help us. At other times his power was in his silent presence. Most of us learned to quietly settle into drawing when Mr. Eldred entered the classroom. His students would begin to draw whatever he set up in the studio—sometimes drawing for an hour or so before Mr. Eldred would make a comment. His first comment might retrieve the threads of a previous lesson as if it had never ended. He was often brief—never belaboring his point. He would turn us back to our drawing again and let us refocus our concentration or ruminate on the lesson. His spare talk, his slow walk, and even the way he worked his cigarettes were intense and measured ways of generating and maintaining his focus and fostering in us a mood of dynamic, creative tension. I especially loved the atmosphere he created.

Mr. Eldred wanted beginning students to keep their drawings “open.” The concept of “openness” is so intuitive now that I don’t remember how he brought me to it, nor the definition he gave then, but he stressed this quality of “openness” often, and his students came to work in this way.

In Intermediate or Advanced Drawing courses he would discuss what a real, finished drawing was. He compared the finished work to a completed poem, both sharing the qualities of clarity, refinement, depth of imagery and ideas, and the amount of attention and effort involved in the process. He hinted that producing what he called a drawing was a rare accomplishment. Mr. Eldred’s concept of what a drawing was became important to us, and his concept remains with me today.

Mr. Eldred offered us reasons to draw. He shared with us both practical and spiritual uses for drawing—from its aid in understanding objects and machines and their workings, to depicting one’s dreams or demons. He would say, “You can come to better know something through drawing,” and “You can draw something well that you already know.” He would often point out the unique qualities of the Binghamton area. He called our attention to the green and gold domes of the area churches as well as the densely smoke-stacked factory-scape of the downtown Triple Cities. He seemed taken with the unusual or the odd and sometimes brought these observations to class, explaining to us what it was that piqued his interest. At times, he would leave the meaning open for us to contemplate. My dog and I once encountered Mr. Eldred on a walking path in Binghamton’s Otsiningo Park, and I recall his being very taken with my Australian Shepherd’s so-called watch-eye and the black fur surrounding this one, odd-colored eye that gave my dog the appearance of wearing a black patch on its face.

Mr. Eldred’s practical approach was occasionally confounding. A drawing student inquired about studying painting, and when Mr. Eldred asked if the student had ever painted anything, he meant paint in all possible permutations. He had to explain to the somewhat confused student that “anything” included walls, chairs, or cars. I saw this as an expression of Mr. Eldred’s belief that art and life were inextricably related.

Most of all I remember the genuine quality of Mr. Eldred’s encouragement and support. When he perceived stressful student struggles in a class, he would often remind us, either with a serious philosophical directive or with lighter humor, something about the nature of our endeavor. He would sometimes say: “You know, you don’t *have* to do this—there are a lot of other things out there to do.” He’d remind us that we needed patience and some practical strategies to master the

ALUMNI REFLECTIONS

experience of drawing. He'd say, "You have to get your pen started each morning (meaning the rather finicky, technical Rapido-graph drawing pens that he liked us to use), just like you get yourself or your car started each day." Basically he wanted us to have success in drawing and to enjoy drawing, but he let us know he was not unfamiliar with the costs and frustrations inherent in it.

Mr. Eldred was a major influence in my studio work at SUNY-Binghamton. His unique, enigmatic, and complex intellectual and experiential teachings were believable and useful, because he did not suggest shortcuts or easy solutions. Instead, he sought to sponsor, and then support, a confrontation between the student and the drawing challenge at hand. It was a beginning and essential step in our art-making!

— Christine Makis

Class of '72

The classroom is not there any more, and neither is Mr. Eldred, but the doorway to that classroom has widened through the mysterious alchemy of making things to enclose the world of art itself.

I still have every drawing I ever did for Mr. Eldred. I have carried them around, wherever I've lived, for 18 years. The things I make to this day are still "for" Mr. Eldred. He is smoking or making a silverpoint somewhere in the back of the room as I draw.

— David Higgins

Class of '84

I saw and heard other people call him Charles, but he was always Mr. Eldred to me. Simply put, he was a most remarkable teacher. His insights into how the mind works—drawn from his own experience making things, as well as watching others do so—were translated into assignments, lectures, and discussions which inspired and challenged his pupils. His distinctive verbal manner, accent, and posture were all the subject of much loving caricature by us, his students.

I will carry a piece of him with me for the rest of my life.

— David Friedheim

Class of '82

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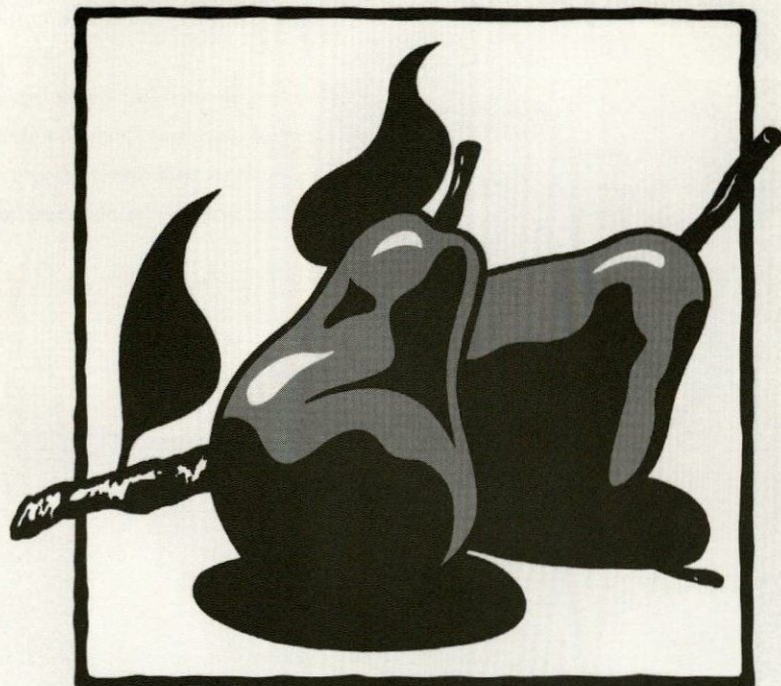
I will carry a piece of him with me for the rest of my life.

— David Friedheim
Class of '82



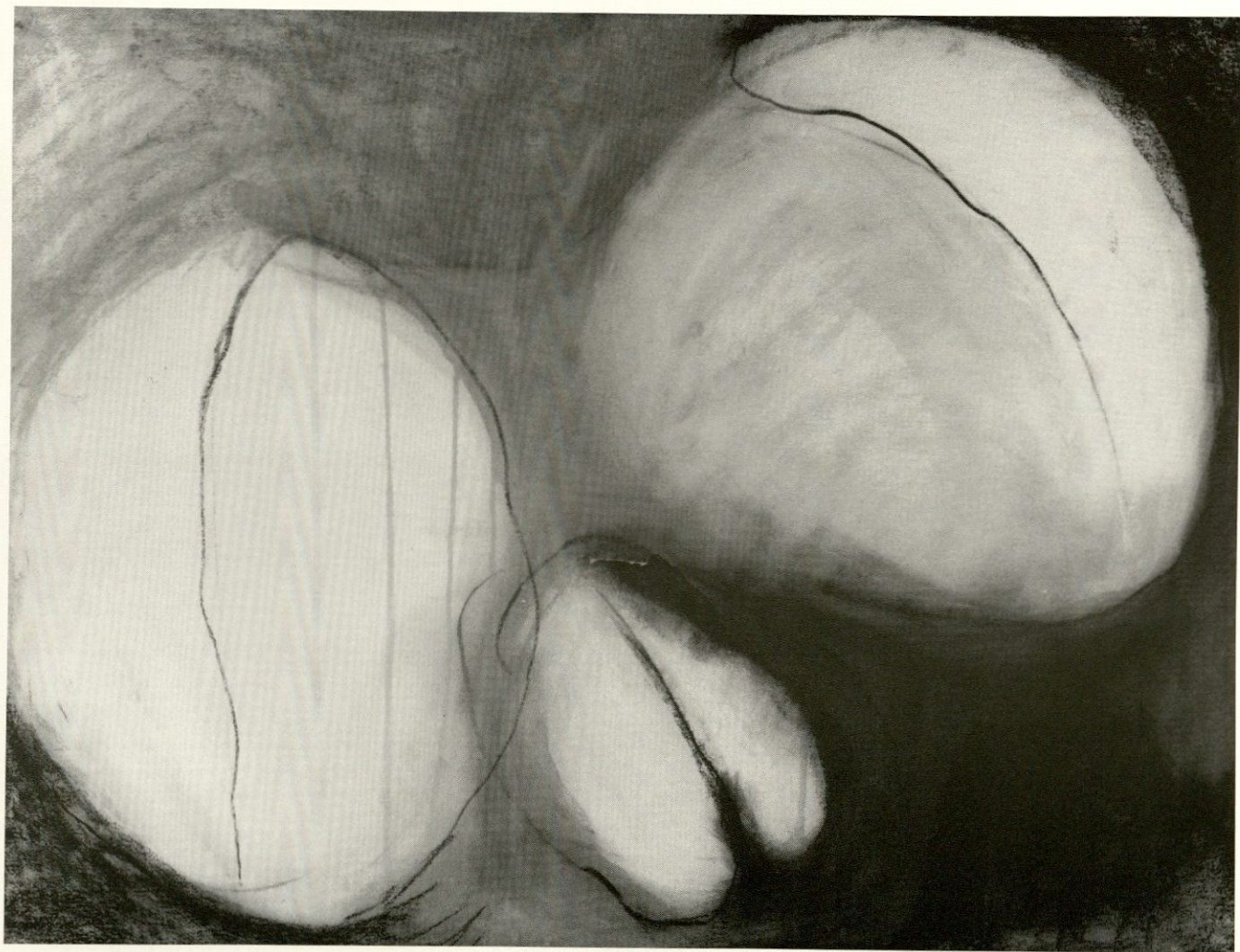
Steve Abusch
Portrait of Charles Eldred, 1990
Photo Collage
15 x 16"

CHARLES'

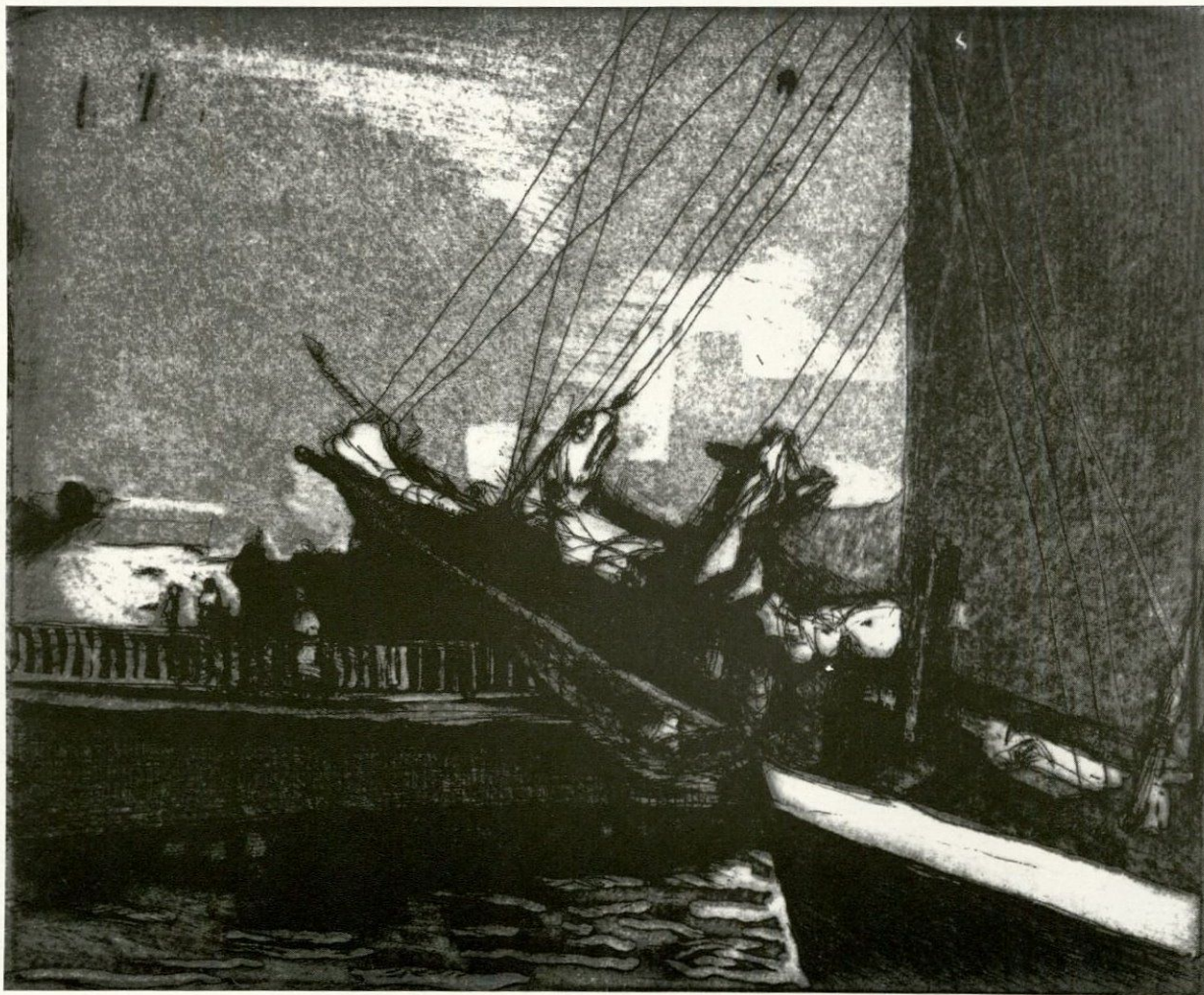


PEARS

David Skeyra
Charles' Pears, 1988
Screenprint
23 x 17"



Jennifer Dennis
Gravity, 1995
Watercolor and pastel on paper
24 x 36"



Leslie Henderson-Harris
Columbus Day Ship for E, 1990
Etching
6 x 5"



Coral Oliver Woodbury
Shadow Sermon, 1993

Intaglio
9 x 12"



Richard Meyer
Untitled, 1993
Oil on linen
24 x 18"



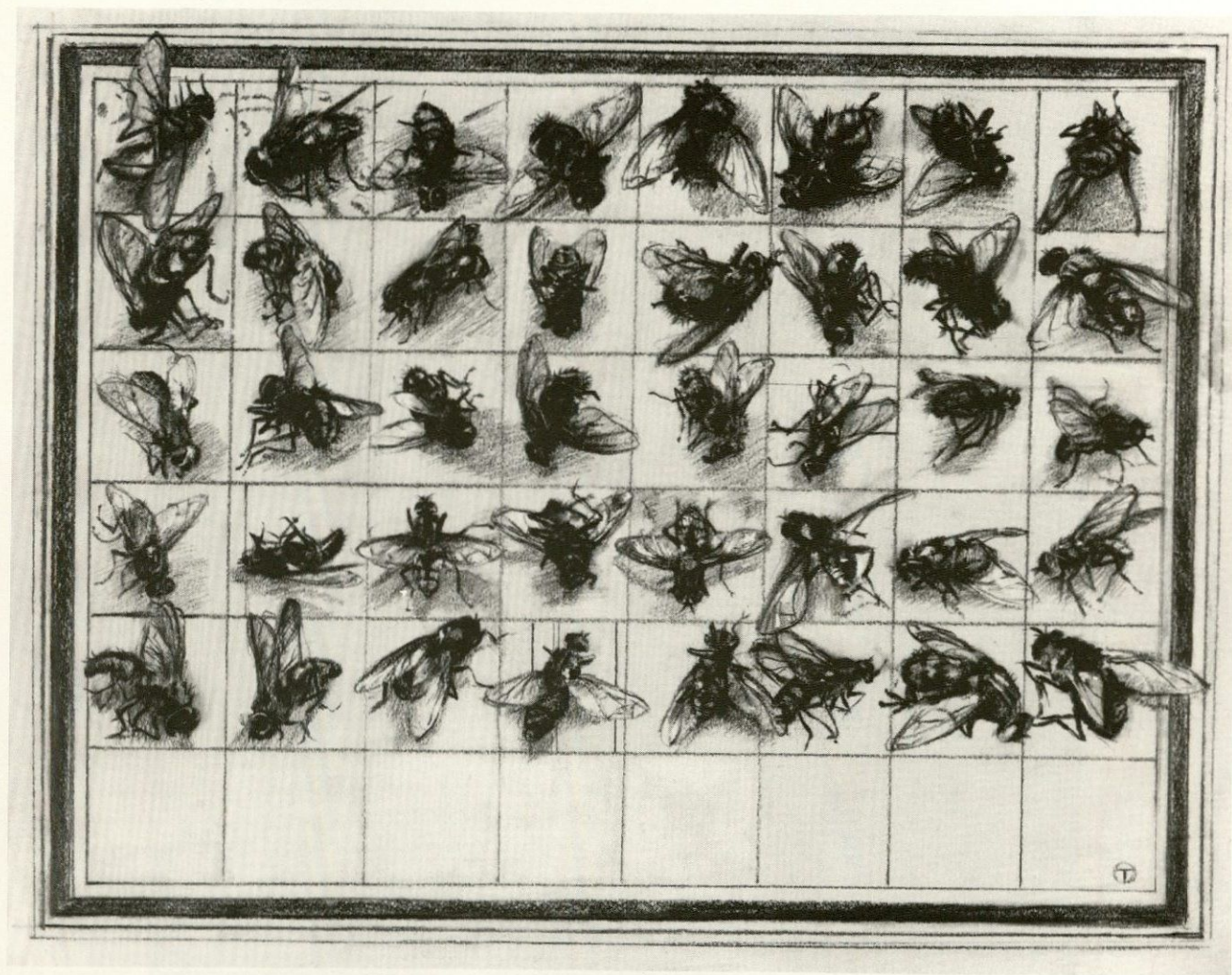
Sara Suh
Untitled, 1994-95
 Watercolor
 29½ x 20¾



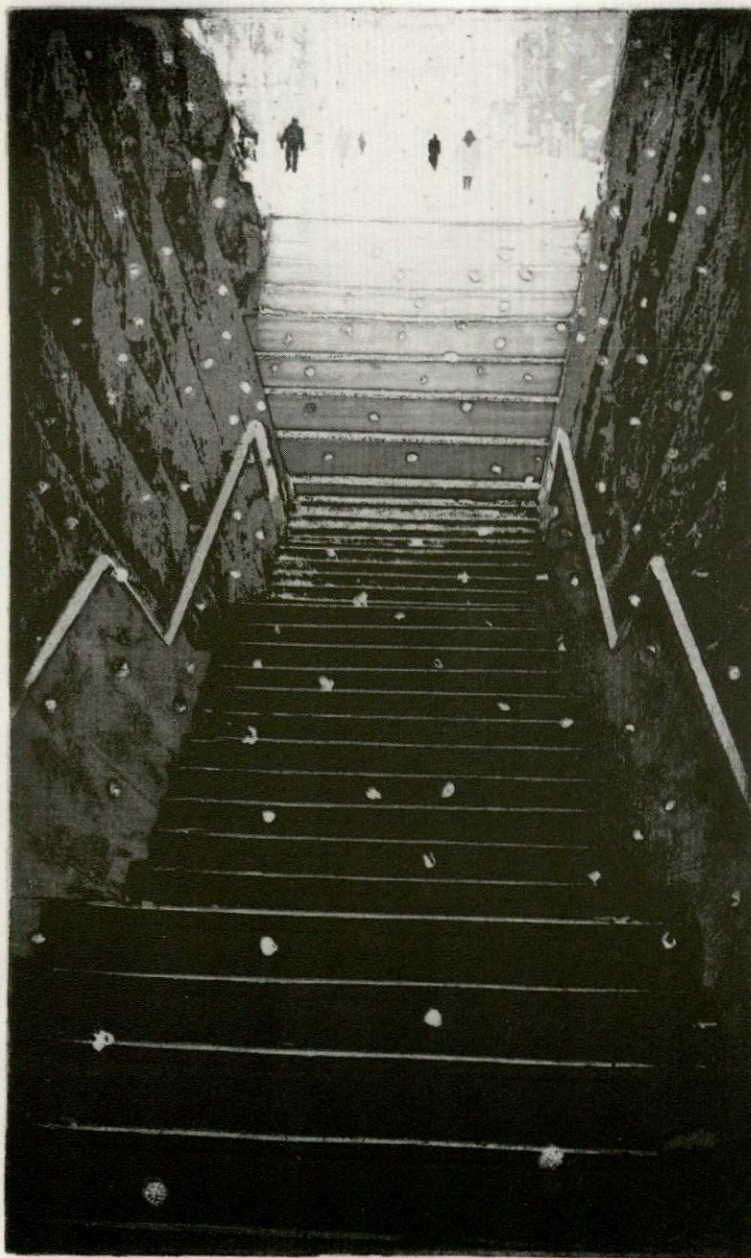
Sara Suh
Homage to E, 1994
 Watercolor
 29½ x 20¾



Shelley Haven
Unarmed, 1995
Oil, pastel, and watercolor
13 x 10"



David Taft
40 Dead Flies, 1993
Graphite, gesso
7 1/2 x 9 1/2"



A.P.

BLIZZARD NYC

d.green'96

Dennis Green
Blizzard, NYC, 1996
Three-plate etching
10 x 16 1/2"



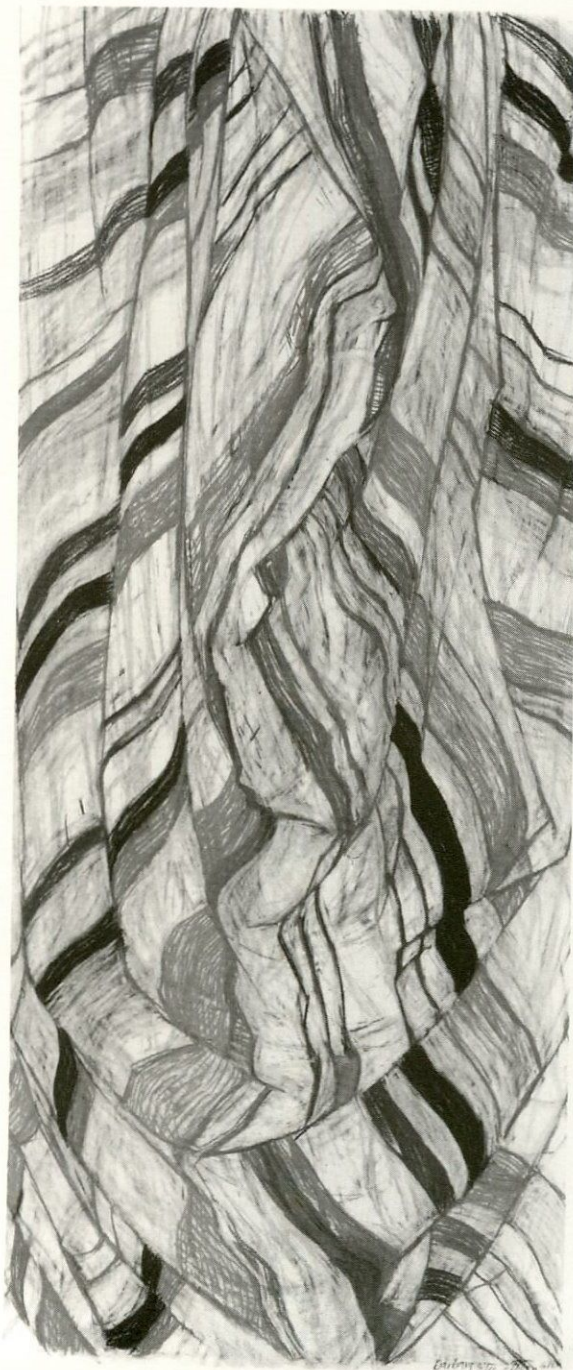
Evelyn Bush Klie
The Hares Dance in the Orchard, 1996
Water media
55 1/2 x 44 1/2"



Diane Sophrin
Interiors, 1991
Oil on linen
48 x 72"



Tami Tolpa
Woman with Crow—My Version, 1995
Collograph
19 x 12"



Barbara Steen-Elton
Vision begins to happen in such a life—Adrienne Rich, 1996
 Pastel
 27 x 55"



Barbara Steen-Elton
Time takes hold of us like a draft upwards—Adrienne Rich, 1996
 Pastel
 27 x 55"



Anne Weber
Shipwreck Interior, 1995
Charcoal
30 x 22"



Rosalyn Jacobs
Ariege Landscape, 1994
Oil on linen
30 x 40"



Kate Collie
Tram Chim #15, 1995
Acrylic and pastel on canvas
60 x 48"



Susan Moran
Bogmen—Study/Head, 1970
Drawing
24 x 30"



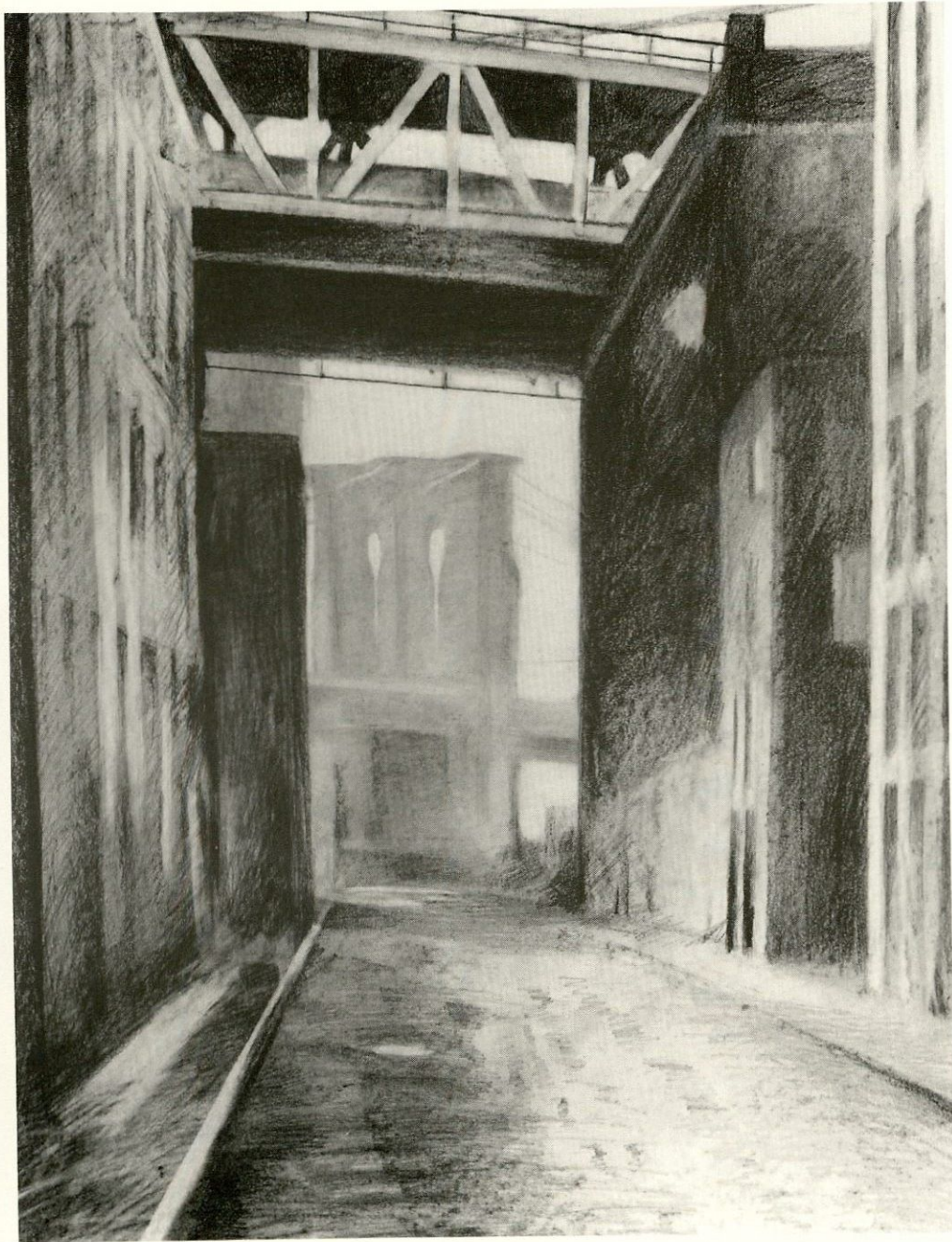
Danielle Krcmar
1994
Plaster, china fragments, dirt
26 x 40"



Danielle Krcmar
1994
Plaster, china fragments, dirt



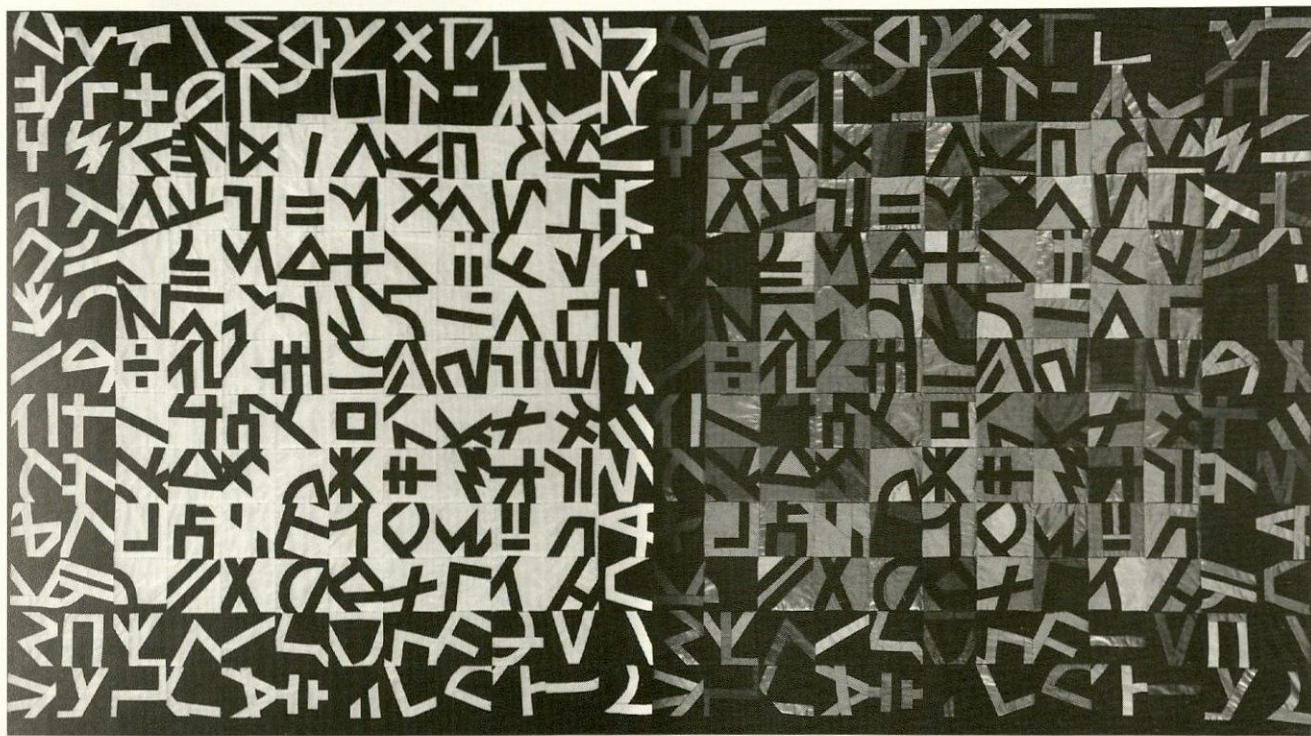
Kate Kretz
3:15, 1994
Acrylic and oil on linen
41 x 65"



Karen Kurcharski
Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass, 1995
Graphite
26 x 19"



Yoko Sugawara
Untitled, 1988
Pen and ink
5 x 7"



Robin Schwalb
Let $X = X$, 1986
Quilt
39 x 72"



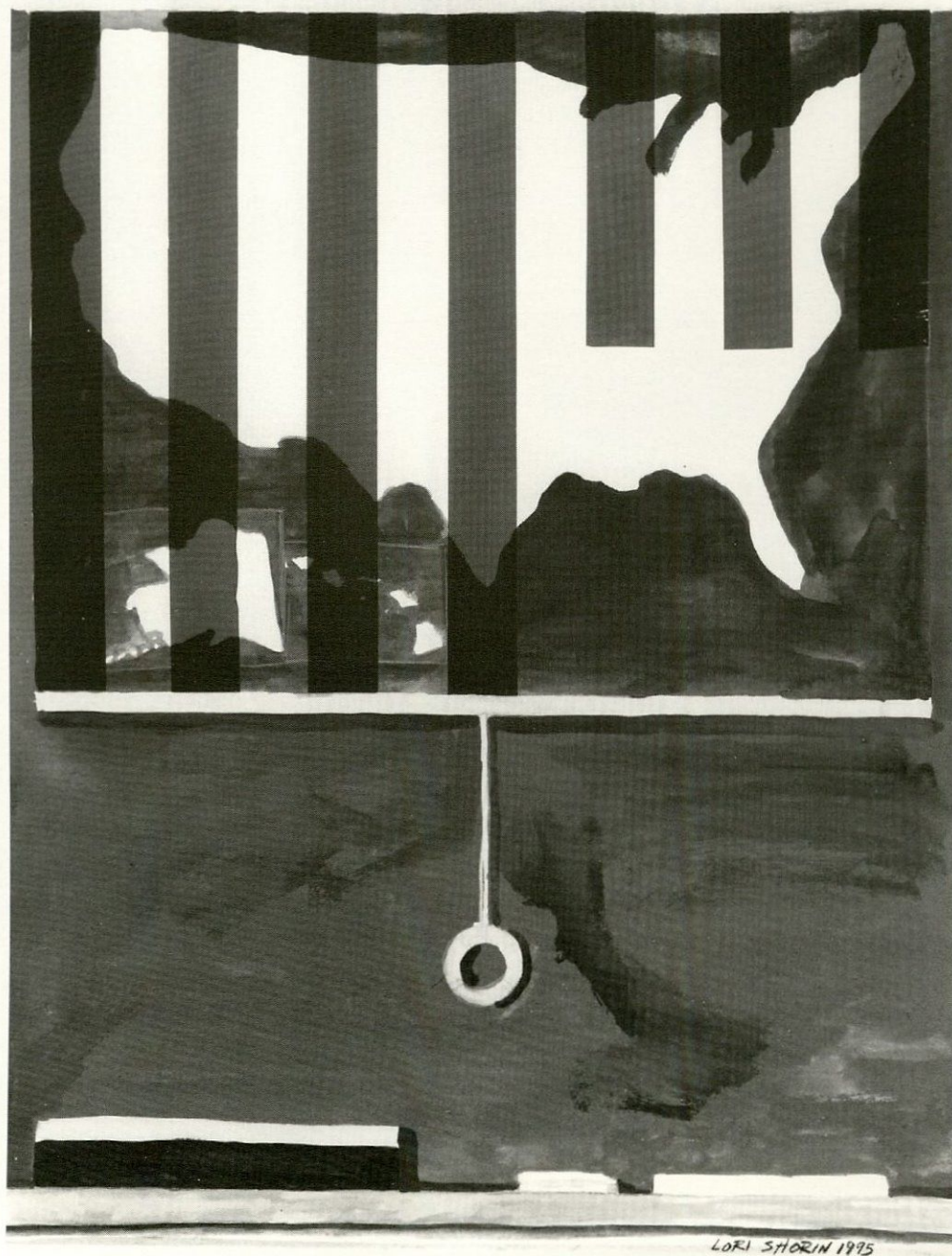
Amy Levine
Teapot, 1978
Oil
20 x 24"



Alicia Rothman
Horses (1 of 2 panels), 1996
 Oil on panel
 8 x 10"

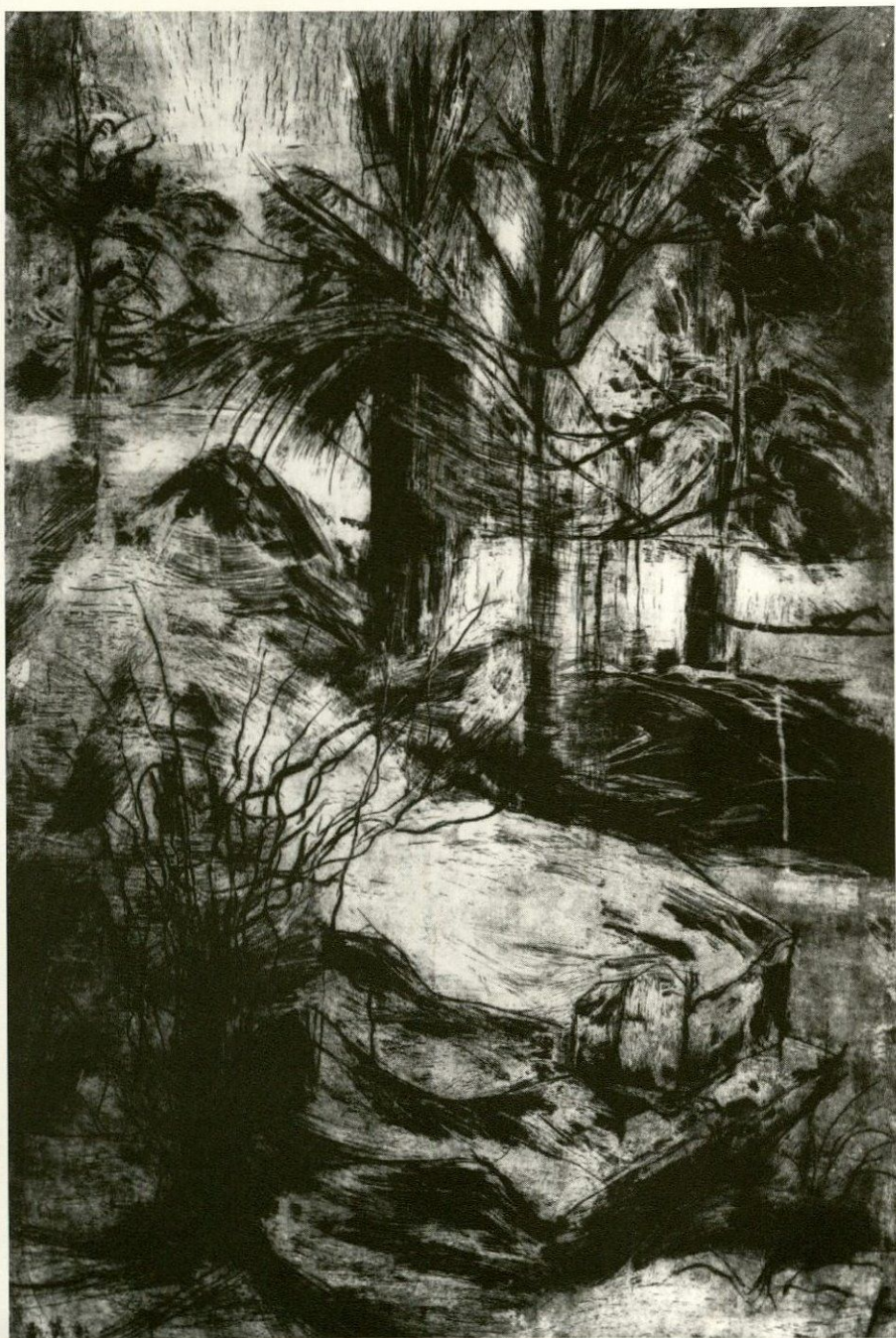


Alicia Rothman
Horses (1 of 2 panels), 1986
 Oil on panel
 10 x 8"



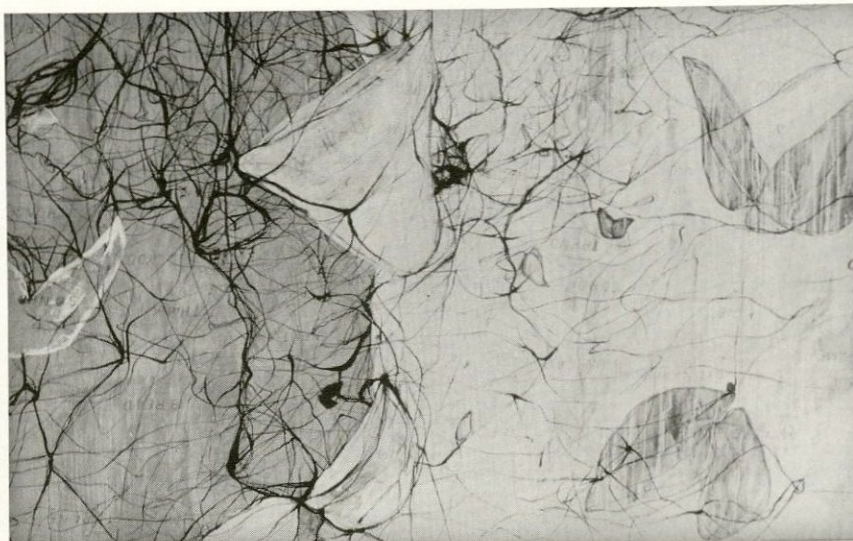
LORI SHORIN 1995

Lori Shorin
Learning Through a Veil of Violence II, 1995
Watercolor
18 x 24"

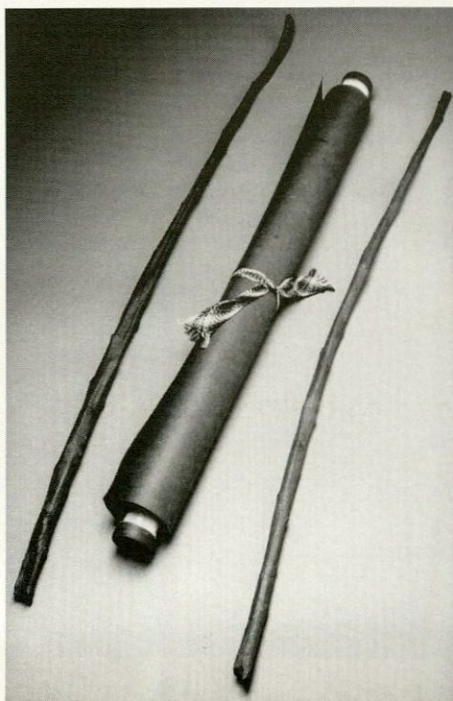


Kathryn Niles
Becca's Hill, 1996

Intaglio
36 x 24"



Deborah Davidson
Voices, 1995, detail
 Mixed media on vellum



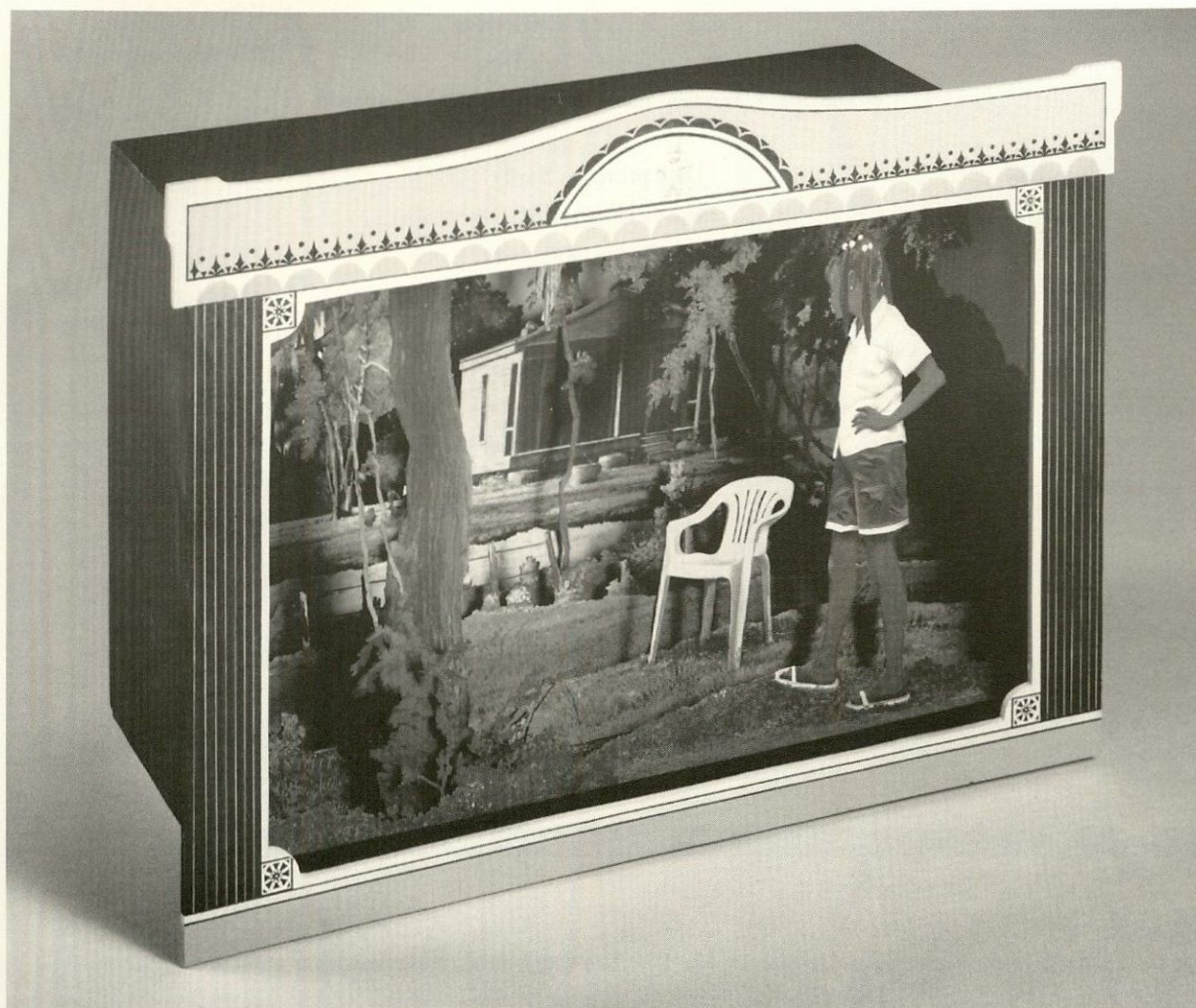
Deborah Davidson
Voices, 1995
 Artist book, scroll, mixed media
 36 x 324"



Patricia Brown
Water Subject II, 1996
Monotype
36 x 24"



Lee Ranaldo
River House Still, 1979
Mixed media on board
16½ x 16½ "



David Higgins
Reverie, 1996
Mixed media
18 x 12 x 10"

CREDITS

Catalog design: David Skyrca

Photographer: Chris Focht

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Art Museum Staff

Lynn Gamwell, Director

Peter Harris, Technician

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Lucie Nelson, Curator

Allyson Tasato, Registrar

Museum Work Study Security Guards

Kimberly Chiarizzi

Kathryn O'Connor

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE ART DEPARTMENT would like to acknowledge the conscientious organizational talents and the long labors of Lucie Nelson, who has been chief coordinator of this exhibit, graciously gathering together mailing lists and personally unwrapping and cataloguing the works. We thank Norma Moses and Judi Bryant for typing and retyping statements, labels, and addresses. We are grateful to the Alumni Association, which was so benevolent with their funding for the catalogue and opening night expenses when Lynn Gamwell approached them.

Charlotte Eldred and her son, Charles D. Eldred, architect, have been the generous lenders of Professor Eldred's works that were photographed and are being exhibited. We thank them for loaning these remarkable drawings and sculptures, which strengthen us.

And finally, we express our appreciation to the alumni who wrote about their experiences here with one very important artist. Their statements and resumes are available for museum visitors to read. Their thoughts have been a comfort and an inspiration. And their work will remain in our memories.